

in the near future—I hope—and I speak on it today to put a spotlight on it so I have that opportunity.

I thank the Chair and thank my colleagues.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the previous amendment.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Rhode Island [Mr. WHITEHOUSE], for himself, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. BINGAMAN, and Mr. MERKLEY, proposes an amendment numbered 3354 to Amendment No. 3336.

(The amendment is printed in the RECORD of Tuesday, March 2, 2010, under "Text of Amendments.")

AMENDMENT NO. 3354 WITHDRAWN

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the amendment is withdrawn.

The Senator from Michigan.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations on the Executive Calendar: Calendar No. 560, the nomination of Terry Yonkers to be an Assistant Secretary of the Air Force; Calendar No. 563, the nomination of Frank Kendall to be Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense; Calendar No. 564, the nomination of Erin Conaton to be Under Secretary of the Air Force; Calendar No. 663, the nomination of Paul Oostburg Sanz to be General Counsel of the Department of the Navy; Calendar No. 664, the nomination of Malcolm O'Neill to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army; Calendar No. 665, the nomination of Jackalyn Pfannenstiel to be an Assistant Secretary of the Navy; that the nominations be confirmed en bloc, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table en bloc, any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD, the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The nominations considered and confirmed en bloc are as follows:

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Terry A. Yonkers, of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Air Force.

Frank Kendall III, of Virginia, to be Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics.

Erin C. Conaton, of the District of Columbia, to be Under Secretary of the Air Force.

Paul Luis Oostburg Sanz, of Maryland, to be General Counsel of the Department of the Navy.

Malcolm Ross O'Neill, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army.

Jackalyn Pfannenstiel, of California, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Navy.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, I thank the Presiding Officer.

I thank my colleagues and the leaders who have been involved in facilitating this. It is long overdue, but I want to thank my colleagues for at least helping to make this happen this afternoon. This will be good news for the Defense Department, good news for our troops. Again, I thank all who have been helpful in this regard.

I yield the floor.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume legislative session.

TAX EXTENDERS ACT OF 2009— Continued

Mr. LEVIN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SPECTER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Pennsylvania is recognized.

Mr. SPECTER. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. SPECTER pertaining to the introduction of S. 3080 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. SPECTER. Madam President, in the absence of any other Senator seeking recognition, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BURRIS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BURRIS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. BURRIS. Madam President, my colleagues and I have spent much of last year debating the issue of health care reform. After nearly a century of false starts and broken promises, Democrats came to Congress determined to enact comprehensive reform. We were confident that this time we would not fall short as our predecessors had done; this time we would deliver the changes the American people have been demanding for so many years. But

over the course of the debate an unfortunate pattern emerged, a pattern of obstructionism and delay and scare tactics designed to derail our efforts to make a difference.

My Democratic colleagues and I worked hard under President Obama's leadership to craft sweeping legislation, but our Republican friends were not interested in passing health care reform. They had no desire to take action and no plan of their own. Instead, they found every opportunity to stall, to clog up the Senate, and score political points by attacking those who supported our efforts. They spread misinformation about death panels and higher costs and rationing coverage even though they knew these things were not in our bill. But they kept repeating this bad information and repeating it until it finally started to take hold.

The ordinary folk who heard these distortions had no reason to believe their elected officials would try to misinform them, so they retained this bad information and they did exactly what our Republican friends wanted them to do—they got angry. They held rallies. They called their Senators and Representatives. They regurgitated the talking points that had been written for them by obstructionists and special interests and the insurance lobby.

As a result, our Republican friends succeeded in holding up our health reform bill. By misinforming the American people, they stirred up an opposition that was tailor made to create confusion and gridlock no matter how hard some people tried to explain the truth because the facts are these.

No Democratic health care proposal has ever included a so-called "death panel."

None of our legislation would result in rationing of any kind.

And, rather than driving costs up, as my Republican friends have argued, nonpartisan analysis consistently shows that the Senate bill would lower costs significantly.

It would reduce the deficit by more than \$130 billion in the first 10 years, and almost \$1 trillion in the decades after that.

In addition, our bill would extend health coverage to 31 million Americans.

It would prevent corporations from discriminating against their customers because of pre-existing conditions.

And it would reduce health premiums for individuals and families, to the tune of hundreds, or even thousands, of dollars per year, depending on income level.

From the very beginning of this debate, I have called for a bill that fulfills the three goals of a public option:

A bill that creates competition in the insurance market. A bill that gives us the tools to hold insurance companies accountable. A bill that will provide cost savings to millions of Americans.

I believe our current proposal can accomplish all of these things. This legislation is not perfect, but it represents